

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-27 are pending in this application.

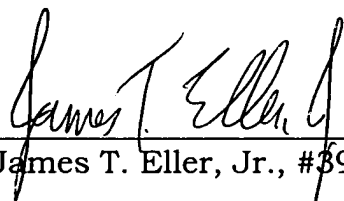
The above claim amendments clarify the invention and improve their form. Such amendments do not add any new matter to the disclosure. Accordingly, entry of the present Preliminary Amendment is deemed proper and respectfully requested.


If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Esther H. Chong (Reg. NO. 40,953) at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By   
James T. Eller, Jr., #39,538

  
JTE/EHC/slb  
2658-0316P

P.O. Box 747  
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747  
(703) 205-8000